



Rep. Bill Hinkle

2005 Legislature Under Way

Serving citizens in...

- Kittitas
- Yakima and
- Grant counties

Committees:

- Children and Family Services (*Ranking Republican*)
- Health Care
- Appropriations

MOD I Building, Room 102
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7808

E-mail address:

Hinkle.Bill@leg.wa.gov

Toll-free hotline:

(800) 562-6000

Hearing impaired:

(800) 635-9993

Internet:

<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/hinkle.htm>



Dear Friends,

Lawmakers have convened in Olympia for a legislative session scheduled to last 105 days. **Thank you** for the opportunity to serve you in the House of Representatives.

We have several big issues on our plate this year. One of the most pressing is **fixing the problems in our state's election system**. The recent election brought to light many inconsistencies and flaws in the way votes are cast and counted. This year the Legislature will consider ways to clean up the mess so we can restore faith in our electoral process.

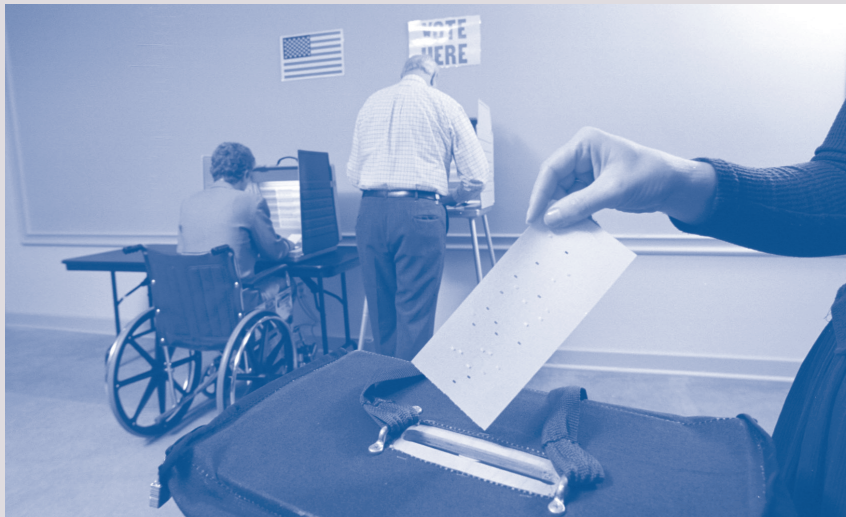
Another big priority this year will be creating a **2-year state budget**. Some are talking about a budget "shortfall," defined as the gap between the amount of estimated state tax collections and the amount of money needed to fulfill the state's spending wish list. Their solution? Raise taxes. In reality, however – thanks to the recovering economy and prioritized spending in the last budget cycle – the state will actually have an additional \$1.7 billion **more** to spend this two-year period than last. The solution seems clear to me – spend less, prioritize the funds that are available and **do not raise taxes** on families and small employers.

I will also continue working hard this year to **find solutions to local challenges**. In addition to tackling the **natural resources** issues always important to those of us in the 13th District, I will also focus on issues related to **children and families**, as well as **health care**. You'll find more about those issues in this newsletter.

I represent you best when we **communicate regularly**. Please contact me whenever you have a question or concern, or need help dealing with a state agency. Also, if you will send me your e-mail address, I will **send you regular updates** throughout the session. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmest regards,

Rep. Bill Hinkle



Fixing our election system

I have heard from hundreds of you about the historically close governor's race and the mistakes and errors that caused you to lose confidence in our electoral system. On the second day of the Legislative session, I voted to **delay ratifying the race for governor for two weeks** until we knew for certain that the race results were an accurate reflection of the legal votes cast. Unfortunately, because Republicans are in the minority in both the House and Senate, our motion failed and the election was ratified.

The election contest now rests with the courts. In the meantime, voters have asked lawmakers to clean up the election system so this mess never happens again. In response, I have proposed the following voting system changes:

- Require polling-place voters to show photo ID. Poll workers would be required to check the photo and the signature on the ID against the signature on the poll books.
- Require that people **register to vote at least 30 days before any election** (current law is 15 days). This will give election workers time to process all new registrations.
- Require voters to **prove citizenship** when registering to vote.

Before the 2004 post-election saga began, I was already crafting a bill that would **require all judicial races and the Superintendent of Public Instruction race to be on the general election ballot**. Today, some of these candidates who receive more than 50 percent of the vote in a primary election are automatically elected without having to run in the general election. In my view, judges and our school chief deserve no less of a mandate than those elected to the legislative or executive branch of our state government. Especially nowadays, as judges play an ever-bigger role in our society, it's important that all citizens have a stake in their election.

Helping children and families

Over the past several years my fellow 13th District legislators and I have helped resolve a number of problems related to child care and foster care cases in our district. This year, I have been appointed the lead negotiator for House Republicans on the House **Children and Family Services Committee**. I will now be shaping the state's policy in this area, ensuring the laws we pass will help at-risk youth and families in our district.

On the first day of session I introduced a bipartisan bill that would create a **scholarship program for students in foster care**. When private donations are made available for foster kids to go to college, my bill would provide matching state funds to help make their dreams a reality.



Aiming for a no-new-taxes budget

Our state is faced with a difference between the amount of estimated state tax collections and the money needed to fund the state's spending wish list. Yet we still have **\$1.7 billion more available** this budget cycle than last.

The governor and many legislators are considering tax increases to fill this gap. That is the wrong direction. Raising taxes now, as our state economy is beginning to recover, would be the worst thing we could do for small employers and working families. It is very important to **balance the next two-year budget without raising general-fund taxes**. I will continue to be your voice in Olympia for fiscal restraint and responsibility.

Representative Bill Hinkle • 13th District

Affordable and accessible health care



I have been asked to serve this year on the House Health Care Committee. One of our biggest challenges will be finding ways to meet citizens' needs for flexible, affordable and tailored health insurance plans. Our state requires that health insurance policies cover dozens of services, regardless of whether subscribers want or need them. That has chased health insurance companies from the state and increased policy costs. **Removing costly government mandates** is key to reducing costs and helping employers afford the tailored coverage their employees want and need. Another of our health care challenges will be **improving the state's mental health system** so we can better meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

Efficiency in state government

Each year Washington spends about **\$10 billion on claim benefits**, mostly in the departments of Social and Health Services, Labor and Industries, Employment Security, and the Health Care Authority (the agency that provides state employee and low-income health care). Because of the huge dollars involved, there is a tremendous potential for fraud in both claim eligibility and bid contracting.

Today, each of these agencies has its own unit designed to find and stop fraud, but let's be honest: sometimes agency politics can override agency investigators. I have introduced a bill to consolidate all the fraud investigation units and place them under the authority of a new **Office of Inspector General**. This proposal would not increase the size of government, it would simply consolidate the chain of command of all our fraud investigation units in the state. The plan would create a truly independent investigation system and help eliminate conflicts that can hinder fraud investigations.



Local legislation

I am sponsoring several pieces of legislation this year that will directly help people in our district. Here are two of them:

- **More room to roam.** I have introduced a bill to give local, state and federal jurisdictions the flexibility to **allow ATVs and ORVs on non-highway roads**, including many Forest Service roads and those owned and operated by state agencies, without the requirement of being street legal. This would not be mandatory, but would provide an option not open to these public landowners now while still protecting private property.
- **Bringing water-related decisions back under local control.** I am introducing a bill that would take the Department of Ecology out of final decisions and applications that come before local water conservancy boards. This would **give local citizens**, rather than bureaucrats in Olympia, **more control over our water resources**. It would also prove a tremendous help to our farmers and ranchers.

Accessing Olympia through the Web

You may be surprised how many bills moving through the Legislature will have a direct impact on you. The Internet is a great way to find those bills and offer your input. It is also a good way to get information related to state government.

Here are some web sites you might find helpful:

- [Leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov) – Here you'll find committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you want to know about the Legislature.
- [Access.wa.gov](http://access.wa.gov) – Access state agencies, apply for unemployment benefits, find a list of local events and festivals, renew your car tabs, and more.
- SBA.gov and/or WSBDC.org – Need help starting or operating a small business? You'll find it here.



Would you like regular legislative updates?

I would like to stay in touch with you throughout the year. If you are interested in receiving e-mail updates this legislative session, please cut off this portion of the newsletter and mail it to me at: Rep. Bill Hinkle, PO Box 40600, Olympia, WA 98504-0600.

Your e-mail address: _____

You can also send your e-mail address to me at: Hinkle.Bill@leg.wa.gov. Simply ask to be signed up for my "legislative updates."



Rep. Bill Hinkle
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

2005 Legislature Under Way

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
OLYMPIA WA
PERMIT NO 92